

# **Long-Range Plan Assessment Framework: Process for Assessing Progress Toward Some Institution-Specific Components of the Long-Range Plan**

## **BACKGROUND**

One of the Commission on Higher Education's statutory responsibilities is statewide planning for higher education, including the development of a long-range plan for higher education in New Jersey that is regularly revised and updated. *A Blueprint for Excellence*, Stage 1 of New Jersey's long-range plan for higher education, was adopted in November 2003. The *Blueprint* calls for the Commission to track progress on the various components of the plan and to annually report progress in meeting key outcome measures. In addition to gauging progress, annual assessment data will assist in developing revisions and updates to the plan as circumstances warrant.

Efforts are underway to implement many of the Stage 1 components of the plan, and Stage 2 of the planning process is focused now on further developing outcome measures and a framework for assessment of progress. A key aspect of that work is the establishment of goals, strategies, and interim milestones.

The development of state or institutional long-range plan goals is significantly enhanced by the use of comparison groups, which provide an external context for goal-setting and assessment. State and institutional comparisons cannot be easily made for all long-range plan components, but when data are readily available, such comparisons provide greater credibility and substance to the assessment and inform the identification of areas in need of improvement. Information about comparison groups' best practices can also be very useful in crafting strategies to achieve goals.

The Commission's annual long-range plan assessment report will be part of a yearly update of the *Blueprint*; this update will include the following items:

- The underlying vision and objectives
- The various components of the plan and key outcome measures
- Baseline data against which progress will be measured
- Aggregate progress in achieving state and institutional goals to advance the plan
- Data comparing New Jersey institutions to counterparts nationally on key outcome measures
- Qualitative data that reflect progress toward achieving the plan
- Revisions and additions as appropriate to adjust to changing environmental circumstances, e.g., changes in demographics, resource availability, or state needs

As noted in the plan, it is fully recognized that external circumstances and funding levels will influence the degree to which some goals can be met.

## **FRAMEWORK FOR INSTITUTIONAL GOALS**

This proposal pertains primarily to the development of institution-specific goals, strategies, and milestones to address several key components of the plan. A number of areas in the long-range plan are directed to institutions, but improvements are likely to be enhanced if each institution identifies several components that will be institutional priorities.

Seven institutional components (Attachment A) are directly related to state goals to enhance student access, student outcomes, and external funding. Using the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and other national data sources, the Commission will assess progress annually, beginning in 2005, on those seven components for all New Jersey institutions and provide comparative national data to add meaningful context; additional comparisons using more precise peer groups may be considered in the future. The Commission's data will be provided at the sector level for the community colleges and independent colleges and universities; it will be provided at the institutional level for the public research universities, state colleges and universities, and the proprietary institutions.

Each institution will be asked to identify at least four of the seven components\* on which the institution will focus primary efforts, based on its unique mission and how it can best contribute to the advancement of the plan. In winter 2005, each institution will report to the Commission the components on which it will focus and a 2010 goal for each of those components; a brief rationale for the selection of the particular components and the goals will be included. (See Attachment B-Example 1.) The institutions will establish internal strategies and annual milestones to achieve each goal. At some point, the Commission will ask institutions to share strategies that have proven to be successful, and a compilation of best practices will be prepared.

Each institution will also have the options of reporting on additional institutional priorities that would advance the long-range plan and/or providing information regarding its comparison to its own institutional peer or aspirational group as part of the rationale. The Commission will strongly encourage institutions to use peer or aspirational group comparisons to inform both the selection of components on which they will focus and the development of goals and milestones. Comparison groups provide a valuable context for goal setting, and they are helpful in identifying best practices to achieve institutional goals. The Commission will assist any institution, upon request, in developing peer or aspirational groups.

The Commission will review the breakdown of the number of institutions focused on each of the seven components. If only a limited number of institutions focus on a particular component, some discussion will be necessary to determine how to address that aspect of the plan.

\*A modification of the seven components may be necessary for the University of Medicine and Dentistry and Thomas Edison State College.

Institutions will annually report to the Commission as to whether they have made progress toward the goal established for each component on which they have chosen to focus primary efforts. This general information will be aggregated to supplement the Commission's comparative data on each component. The assessment report will therefore include information on each component, indicating how many institutions in the state are focused on the particular area and providing comparative data. Comparisons will be made to the previous year as well as to national counterparts. (See Attachment B-Example 2.)

There are additional institution-specific components in the plan, as well as components related to the state and other entities. Each measurable component will be tracked by some means through the assessment reports. For example, the Commission will work with the institutions to collect information about new regional and national recognition of institutional programs and achievements, aggregate and report that information by sector, and use the information to update the most marketable assets findings. Other examples include the use of baseline data recently collected about public awareness of New Jersey higher education and employer satisfaction with graduates of New Jersey colleges and universities; periodic progress will be measured against the baseline data.

The long-range plan assessment process will continue to evolve as circumstances warrant. Ultimately, the assessment of statewide progress on all of the key outcomes in *A Blueprint for Excellence* will help to guide future higher education planning, policy development, and initiatives.

**Attachment A**  
**Institution-Specific Long-Range Plan Components**  
**For Which Comparative Information Will Be Reported Annually**

The proposal calls for each institution to focus improvement efforts on at least four of the following long-range plan components:

- Student retention rates
- Student transfer rates (for community colleges)
- Undergraduate student graduation rates (2- and 3-year rates for community colleges; 4- and 6-year rates for baccalaureate institutions)
- Graduation rates of low-income and minority students
- External research dollars (research universities and other institutions where appropriate to their mission)
- Private, nontuition revenues
- Number of students served

**Attachment B**  
**Assessment Framework Examples**

**EXAMPLE 1**

**EXAMPLE OF WINTER 2005 INSTITUTIONAL REPORT TO  
COMMISSION ON 2010 GOALS FOR AT LEAST FOUR OF THE  
SEVEN COMPONENTS**

(NAME OF COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY)  
INSTITUTIONAL FOCUS ON KEY LONG-RANGE PLAN COMPONENTS

<u>Selected Component</u>	<u>2010 Goal</u>
Student Retention Rate ( <i>Brief rationale</i> )	xx%
Student Transfer Rate ( <i>Brief rationale</i> )	xx%
Number of Students Served ( <i>Brief rationale</i> )	xx
Retention/Graduation Rate of Low-Income/Minority Students ( <i>Brief rationale</i> )	xx%
Additional Institution-Specific Goal (if desired) ( <i>Brief rationale</i> )	xx

## EXAMPLE 2

### EXAMPLE OF INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED ANNUALLY BY THE COMMISSION FOR EACH OF THE SEVEN COMPONENTS

#### COMPONENT 1 – STUDENT RETENTION RATES

**A total of 30 institutions are focused on improving retention rates. In 2005, 25 of those institutions made progress toward their 2010 goals.**

#### COMMUNITY COLLEGE DATA ON STUDENT RETENTION RATES

The student retention rate from freshman to sophomore year increased from xx% in 2004 to xx% in 2005 at the community colleges. That compares favorably to the national average rate of xx%. In addition, each of five institutions reported being at or above the rate of its individual peer group.

#### AVERAGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE RETENTION GRADUATION RATES

	<u>NJ</u>	<u>US</u>
2003	xx%	xx%
2004	xx%	xx%

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***The same pattern of information will be provided for:***

INDEPENDENT SECTOR DATA ON STUDENT RETENTION RATES

INDIVIDUAL PROPRIETARY INSTITUTION DATA ON STUDENT RETENTION RATES

INDIVIDUAL STATE COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY DATA ON STUDENT RETENTION RATES

INDIVIDUAL PUBLIC RESEARCH UNIVERSITY DATA ON STUDENT RETENTION RATES